

M A T I L D A,

A N

ORIGINAL POEM,

I N

S E V E N C A N T O S.

INSCRIBED TO THE

*Hon. GEORGE FULK LYTTTELTON.*

---

BY MR. BEST.

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---

Why does my Pulse beat languid as I write this?—I see the injured Spirit  
wave her Head, and turn off silent from the Author of her Miseries and  
Dishonours.—I lose the Feelings for myself in her's—Adieu! poor luckless  
Maiden!

---

STERNE.

L O N D O N :

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THE FOLLOWING  
ORIGINAL POEM  
IS INSCRIBED,  
WITH EVERY RESPECT,  
TO  
THE HON. GEORGE FULK LYTTTELTON,  
BY HIS  
MOST OBEDIENT,  
HUMBLE SERVANT,

*T. B.*

ORIGINAL OF P. O. M.

RECEIVED

THE HON. CHANCELLER EXCELLENCY

RECEIVED

RECEIVED

T. R.



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# M A T I L D A.

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## C A N T O I.

---

COME, Fancy, darling maid ! the child of thought,  
Whose magic influence I so long have sought ;  
Whether in Windsor's pleasing shades reclin'd,  
Fann'd by the cooling breeze and whisp'ring wind ;  
Or on the banks of Thames's silver streams, 5  
Where radiant Sol reflects his golden beams,  
Where sheep recumbent deck its fertile shore,  
And sturdy sinews ply the lab'ring oar :  
Come, sportive queen, forsake awhile the seats  
Of beauteous HAGLEY, and its close retreats, 10  
Where Nature with unequall'd beauty reigns,  
And smiles benignant on the fruitful plains ;

B

Where

Where fam'd Frefcata's rivall'd fcenes arife,  
 And all Italia's viftas meet the eyes :  
 Come, with Imagination's pow'rs combin'd, 15  
 And with poetic beauties fill my mind :—  
 Bear me, O bear me ! on thy foaring wing,  
 That I may tafte the Heliconian fpring :  
 And like fome florift, who the plains explores,  
 Culls with a careful hand its choicelt ftores ; 20  
 Inspir'd by thee, from Genius let me glean  
 Thofe thoughts moft pleafing to adorn my theme.

Thrice hail ! auspicious days, when joys compleat  
 In this, then happy bofom, took their feat ;  
 When, blefs'd with thee, O Lyttelton ! I ftray'd, 25  
 Carelefs, along Blackheath, or Greenwich fhade ;  
 When, with our little troop in due array,  
 With minds as jocund as the dawning day,  
 Our claffics done, we by the ufher led,  
 The Park's much-fam'd inviting hills befpread ; 30  
 Transported faw the Britifh bulwarks ride,  
 And cumb'rous drop adown the filver tide,  
 While

While future navies on the stocks appear'd,  
 And to the heav'ns their infant glories rear'd :  
 'Twas then those little heroes felt a flame 35  
 To serve their country, and exalt their name,  
 Who since have nobly fought, and gain'd applause,  
 Their king defended, and confirm'd their laws,  
 With conqu'ring hands have dealt terrific blows,  
 And thunder'd veng'ance on their daring foes. 40  
 No worldly cares or troubles then we knew,  
 But on the wings of blifs our moments flew ;  
 The troop of ghastly ills which haunt mankind,  
 As yet were aliens to the youthful mind ;  
 No fears had we, save those which intervene 45  
 From the neglected task, unfinish'd theme ;  
 Hygiea, welcome maid, bespread our train,  
 And breath'd fresh vigour in each glowing vein.  
 But since those halcyon days, I've had my share,  
 As well as others, of corroding care ; 50  
 Have felt those pangs the human bosom feels,  
 As manhood ripens, and its cares reveals :  
 Sorrow, with humid eye, and pallid Grief,  
 And drooping Sickness, suing for relief ;

And

And wayward Passions, undermining life, 55  
 And hell-born Discord, and detested Strife :  
 But what short-sighted being here below,  
 Can say from future periods what will flow ?  
 That pow'r is not to us, frail mortals, given,  
 Yet ne'er escapes th' all-searching eye of Heav'n. 60

If you, O Lyttelton ! my theme approve,  
 'Twill all my anxious cares and fears remove ;  
 Enough, if sanction'd by your honour'd name,  
 Tho' thousand tongues conspire to damn its fame ;  
 You future senates wisely shall controul, 65  
 And spread your eloquence from pole to pole ;  
 Your well-projected plans will e'er be found  
 To spread their social benefits around ;  
 From all your schemes success will ever flow,  
 And all your actions probity will shew ; 70  
 The Virtues and the Graces form your train,  
 And peerless deeds eternalize your name.  
 For me, I'll seek some neat sequester'd cot,  
 And live contented in the peaceful spot

Where



Where I can listen to a purling rill, 75  
 That gliding gently turns the useful mill ;  
 Where I can hear sweet Philomel repine  
 Of her hard fate, in melody divine ;—  
 Can hear the village peal on seasons gay,  
 Now burst upon the ear, now die away ;— 80  
 Can, stretch'd along the cooling shade, peruse  
 Some sage historian, or some cheerful muse ;  
 The great Disposer of events adore,  
 Admire his wisdom, and his aid implore :  
 But there, or should I by mischance be tofs'd, 85  
 Where snows continual reign, and piercing frost ;  
 Or where fierce sun-beams vertically shine,  
 Dry up the lakes, and penetrate the mine ;  
 Yet, yet, my honour'd friend, I still should find,  
 Yourself and virtues crowd upon my mind : 90  
 And as some exile, from his native home  
 Doom'd on the continental tract to roam,  
 Stands pensive on those \*cliffs which tow'ring soar,  
 And wafts a heart-felt sigh to Albion's shore ;  
 So I, regretting, should those times review 95  
 I pass'd with Peace, with Happiness, and you.

\* Of Calais.



## CANTO II.

**T**O warn the Fair against insidious snares,  
 Expose the stratagems of their betray'rs ;  
 When virtue's lost what dire misfortunes rise  
 To place in strongest light before their eyes, 100  
 I strike the lyre—Assist, ye tuneful Nine,  
 My humble strains, and favour the design !  
 Shield me, O shield me ! from the Critic's rage !  
 And let th' intent his dreaded wrath assuage.

Remote from cities, fair Matilda smil'd, 105  
 A virtuous, much belov'd, and only child ;  
 From infancy her tender thoughts were train'd  
 In wisdom's rules, and by those rules restrain'd ;  
 The good that ever flows from virtuous deeds,  
 What happiness from piety proceeds ; 110  
 From vice, what ghastly mis'ries ever flow,  
 Disgrace, destruction, infamy, and woe,

Were

Were all inculcated within her breast,  
 Where melting Pity reign'd the primal guest ;  
 Where no contending passions had essay'd 115  
 To rend the bosom of the peaceful maid ;  
 But all subjected under Reason's rule,  
 Were, like the shades in summer, still and cool.  
 Dame Nature at her birth her pow'rs combin'd,  
 And granted peerless charms to strength of mind ; 120  
 Beauty itself was pictur'd in her eye,  
 And soft Humanity stood trembling by ;  
 Those kindred glances oft unheeded stole,  
 Which speak the feelings of the feeling soul,  
 Which a susceptible, tender bosom shew, 125  
 Where love and friendship's fires congenial glow :  
 Her auburn tresses loosely flow'd behind,  
 Floated in air, and wanton'd in the wind :  
 The rose's bloom her virgin cheek bespread,  
 The Graces charm'd in all she did and said ; 130  
 Her fine-turn'd shape with \*Medicis might vie,  
 And never fail'd to catch th' admiring eye.

\* Venus de Medicis.

The brilliant diamond thus its charms displays,  
 And cheers our vision with refulgent rays ;  
 Its worth intrinsic all the nations know 135  
 To be in value equal to its shew.

Say, Muse, from whence this beauteous maiden rose,  
 And fair Matilda's origin disclose :  
 Say, whence her fascinating charms she gain'd,  
 And all her ample field of knowledge drain'd. 140  
 Scarce had her eyes dawn'd on the joyous day,  
 And cheer'd creation with their sparkling ray,  
 Ere from her infant arms her mother fled  
 To realms of bliss, and join'd the happy dead ;  
 Left her to prove a tender father's care, 145  
 His love experience, and his blessings share :  
 Thrice happy maiden ! blest'd with such a fire,  
 In whose chaste bosom reign'd celestial fire ;  
 Whose elegant and high accomplish'd mind  
 Shone more conspicuous to the virtues join'd : 150  
 With him the dismal cry of anguish found  
 A grand specific for the painful wound ;

The

The shiv'ring wretch whom cold and hunger press,  
 Especially the good man in distress,  
 In him for all their troubles found relief, 155  
 Who sooth'd their mis'ry, and becalm'd their grief.  
 So the bright sun, impartial in his pow'r,  
 Beams on the forest and the lowly flow'r;  
 The whole creation feels his rip'ning flame,  
 On seas and purling rills, he shines the same. 160

Long in the gilded scenes of life he shone,  
 And reign'd a fav'rite near his prince's throne;  
 But he, unskilful in the flatt'ring art,  
 Which fools the senses, and betrays the heart,  
 The idol only of the weak and vain, 165  
 Who court its influence and compose its train,  
 The pow'rful spell which o'er the fair prevails,  
 Who eager listen to its fulsome tales,  
 Was for his former services displac'd,  
 And by a servile crew his name disgrac'd: 170  
 Yet, yet, he nobly dar'd to speak the truth,  
 Conceal'd from princes from their earliest youth;

D

The



The venal, sycophantic, selfish crowd,  
 From their king's sight this precious jewel shroud.  
 The ways and manners of the world he knew, 175  
 And did as heartily despise them too:  
 He scorn'd to see the gilded chariot roll,  
 Which bore some neutral born without a foul,  
 Some horn-book, common-place, unletter'd knave;  
 A foe to virtue, and to vice a slave: 180  
 He blush'd to see those men creep into place,  
 Devoid of merit, and a stupid race.  
 His manly, feeling bosom ever burn'd  
 At injur'd innocence, and virtue spurn'd;  
 To see great talents unrewarded go, 185  
 And trampled down by ignorance, their foe,  
 To see the moral duties all o'erthrown,  
 Their laws subverted, and their vot'ries groan:  
 In short, the more he cast his eyes around,  
 The more distress and infamy he found. 190  
 To leave those scenes which horror had inspir'd,  
 He to a happy vale with speed retir'd;  
 Banish'd all worldly subjects from his breast,  
 And pass'd the fleeting hours in peace and rest.

His

His better thoughts were all intent on heav'n, 195

The rest were to his dear Matilda given :

With greatest care he form'd her tender mind,

Found it, with pleasure, to the good inclin'd :

And like some swain, who sees his garden rise

In various hues before his ravish'd eyes, 200

With careful hand explores the fruitful soil,

That no obnoxious weeds its beauty spoil ;

So he, with caution, watch'd her tender years,

That nothing vile should taint her young ideas ;

That nothing opposite to virtue stole, 205

In secret, on her unpolluted soul.

## CANTO III.

**N**EAR to Anselmo's habitation stood  
 An ancient pile, furrounded by a wood ;  
 Nature, not elegant, but awful reign'd,  
 And on substantial views her sway maintain'd: 210  
 Majestic oaks their sturdy branches spread,  
 And tow'ring to the skies their honours shed.  
 On craggy rocks huge pines were seen to grow,  
 And cataracts impetuous foam'd below :  
 There, toppling castles met the wand'ring eye, 215  
 Whose ivy'd walls return'd the huntsman's cry ;  
 Here, shaded walks diffus'd religious gloom,  
 Which scarce receiv'd the glimpses of the moon,  
 Where clam'rous rooks brought up their callow care,  
 And melancholy owls and hems were there ; 220  
 Where'er you turn'd the eye was Nature seen,  
 Pictur'd in strongest tints, and striking mien.

The

The mansion long had stood the brunts of time,  
 Yet unimpair'd was standing in its prime :  
 Lances and armour grac'd the grand old hall,      225  
 Furbish'd with care, and fit'd along the wall.  
 And as of yore, when pow'rful magic reign'd,  
 Courageous knights immortal honour gain'd  
 By rescuing a lorn and captive maid  
 From some old castle in enchantment laid :      230  
 So did this vast stupendous pile appear,  
 As if some sage enchanter triumph'd here,  
 Who by his spells had pow'r to grieve mankind,  
 To fix the wand'ring stars, and hush the wind.

Here young Castalio dwelt, from heroes sprung, 235  
 Whose warlike deeds by bards of old were sung ;  
 Not more distinguish'd by the trump of fame,  
 For dauntless courage, than for spotless name,  
 A long, illustrious race, by honour led,  
 Who wept their country's wrongs, and for them bled;  
 Who rush'd impetuous thro' barbarian foes,  
 And strew'd the purple field by mortal blows.

E

Favour'd



Favour'd with Fortune's smiles Castalio reign'd,  
 And born to affluence ev'ry wish obtain'd;  
 Nature had form'd him with a pleasing face, 245  
 A striking person, and a manly grace;  
 Good sense, with strong insinuation, join'd  
 To ev'ry grace that captivates the mind,  
 Made him admir'd by ev'ry one at sight,  
 His manners pleas'd, his converse gave delight. 250  
 From visiting the fam'd Italian shore,  
 He vers'd in foreign climes came lately o'er;  
 And there had gain'd that ease, that sweet address,  
 Which ever will the cultur'd mind impress,  
 Which ever must o'er pedantry prevail, 255  
 Tho' it may thunder classics thick as hail:  
 And our all-wise Creator sure design'd  
 We should our manners form as well as mind,  
 Or he to us had not a person giv'n  
 Just like his own, and all the saints in heav'n! 260  
 No wonder that Castalio then should please,  
 Possess'd of such alluring charms as these,  
 No wonder that he gain'd Matilda's heart,  
 And in her bosom fix'd the fatal dart.

To

To see Anselmo oft Castalio came, 265  
 By which Matilda caught love's potent flame ;  
 Which, when Anselmo saw, with grief oppress'd,  
 He chid her passion, and forbid his guest ;  
 For knowing man, he in his mind could see,  
 'Midst all his graces, tints of treachery : 270  
 Forewarn'd of this, he every effort try'd  
 Matilda's ill-plac'd passion to deride.  
 But tho' she e'er rever'd his sound advice,  
 She now, alas ! did not regard his voice :  
 'Twas needless all—he could not move her mind, 275  
 Now dead to all but love, to reason blind.  
 What art thou, Love ? that thus canst change the soul,  
 Canst blot out Reason's rules, and all controul ;  
 The proud canst humble, mighty monarchs sway,  
 Make clowns accomplish'd, and the sober gay ; 280  
 That now, alas ! mak'st me, thy votary, pine,  
 For sweet Corinda, virtuous and divine ?  
 I know thee well, and long thy pow'r have known,  
 Streams hear me sigh, and lofty mountains groan ;  
 Borne on impetuous winds my accents rise, 285  
 And fill with mournful sounds the spangled skies.  
 Not

Not always tempests agitate the main,  
 Not always winter faddens all the plain ;  
 But in that breast which Cupid's wiles ensnare,  
 There reign continual storms, and carking care. 290  
 Matilda oft, to ease her love-sick soul,  
 Unknown amidst Castalio's grounds would stroll,  
 There, sitting pensive on some craggy steep,  
 By Grief attended—her misfortunes weep:

“ Ah ! beauteous scenes, that strike the soul with awe,  
 “ And from the teeming mind reflection draw,  
 “ To ye, I brooding o'er my woes appeal,  
 “ Who feel those pangs a virgin ne'er did feel :  
 “ Ye mould'ring walls, with ivy clothed o'er,  
 “ Ye gloomy woods, where jarring tempests roar, 300  
 “ Ye headlong streams, that rush upon the plain,  
 “ Then serpentine your progress to the main ;  
 “ Ye horror-breathing caves, where darkness reigns,  
 “ And sounds uncommon chill the shrinking veins ;  
 “ Where issuing forth, is heard the mountain's groan,  
 “ Which from its center sends the passing moan ;  
 “ To

" To ye, a maid unburthens all her grief,  
 " Oh, grant a refuge ! and Oh grant relief !  
 " And sweetest chantrefs of the feather'd throng,  
 " Calm this sad bosom with your dulcet song, 310  
 " Where love and duty all their pow'rs combine,  
 " Which shall triumphant rule this breast of mine :  
 " But 'tis decreed that love must bear the sway,  
 " And I, submitting, must his pow'r obey ;  
 " Yes, yes, the dear Castalio ! e'er must prove 315  
 " Matilda's fix'd, unalterable love."

She said—all nature stood attentive round,  
*And love triumphant, rocks and woods resound.*



## CANTO IV.

**A**S she one morn her plaintive story told,  
 When bright Aurora capp'd the hills with gold ; 320  
 From afar off she heard the huntsman's joys,  
 Filling with clam'rous shouts the vaulted skies ;  
 The echoing horn pour'd forth its chearful sounds,  
 Join'd to the concert of the deep-mouth'd hounds ;  
 The joyous tumult fill'd the hollow rocks, 325  
 And from the verdant pastures drove the flocks ;  
 Hills, dales, and forests heard the well-known sound,  
 And fiery hunters shook the solid ground :  
 Near and more near the eager sportsmen drew,  
 And soon the hart, quick-panting, by her flew. 330  
 She also try'd to fly, alas ! in vain,—  
 Her feet adher'd, like Daphne's, to the plain ;  
 For now Castalio, foremost in the chace,  
 Had caught a glimpse of her enchanting face,

Had

Had check'd the fury of his hunter's flame, 335  
And quick dismounting, to Matilda came.

" And hast thou deign'd at last, dear maid,"  
he cry'd,

" To visit here, where I and Peace reside ?  
" Peace, did I say, alas ! there's none for me,  
" Since, cruel, banish'd from the sight of thee. 340  
" And may I to myself this favour take—  
" And hast thou play'd the truant for my sake ?  
" O speak, bright angel ! quickly let me know,  
" Thus prostrate at thy feet myself I throw ;  
" And here I swear, by all the pow'rs above, 345  
" By all my former vows, and plighted love,  
" I'll ever constant prove to thee, dear maid,  
" 'Till this frail being shall in dust be laid ;  
" And when our souls to blissful seats shall soar,  
" I then shall love thy image more and more : 350  
" My riches, honours, wealth, and all are thine,  
" Permit me then, dear maid, to call thee mine ;  
" Leave, for a while, a rigid father's care,  
" And to the fashionable world repair ;

" With

" With me this night, my love, consent to fly, 355

" Where London's turrets strike th' astonish'd eye,

" I'll be thy kind protector, friend, and guide,

" And my Matilda make Castalio's bride."

He ceas'd—She wrapt in thought some time remain'd,

'Till her confusion had fresh courage gain'd ; 360

And then (her face with heav'nly blushes spread)

Like Cyprian Venus, thus Matilda said :

" And may I then believe Castalio true—

" And does he with a heart-felt passion sue ?

" Yes, yes, I must believe his vows sincere ; 365

" And thus receive them with a sacred tear :

" 'Tis you, dear youth, who o'er this heart preside,

" 'Tis you alone in whom I will confide ;

" No more will I oppose unfeigned love,

" But o'er the world with you, dear youth, I'll rove ;

" On honour, love, and friendship, I rely,

" And when night's shades approach, my home will fly ;

" With you, a desert would Matilda charm,

" Nor could its savage monsters her alarm.

" To

" To you, my much-lov'd youth, I then will trust;  
" Be strict to honour, and to virtue just." 376  
Joy seiz'd them both, they took a short adieu,  
Then to her home Matilda quickly flew.

The good Anselmo saw her blushes rise,  
And fear and joy, by turns, possess her eyes; 380  
Saw strong emotions struggling in her soul,  
And to ill-fated love ascrib'd the whole :

" Why, why, unhappy girl! these sighs?" he cry'd,  
" When will these storms within thy breast subside ?  
" Dost thou yet turn from Reason's voice away, 385  
" And let fantastic Love usurp her sway ?  
" Use ev'ry effort, quickly make the shore  
" Before the bleak and angry tempests roar.  
" Life's rugged path is difficult and hard,  
" To smooth the way should be our chief regard, 390  
" Enough is interspers'd with storms and snares,  
" Without our trying to increase its cares :  
" Recall then, child, thy sense in mazes led,  
" And leave love's labyrinth for the mad to tread :



" Stay first till friendship firm matures the flame, 395  
 " Then love sincerely, and I ne'er shall blame ;  
 " On this sure basis rais'd, it long will last,  
 " When ev'ry youthful joy is fled and past ;  
 " 'Tis friendship then, which will the mind engage,  
 " And warm the chilly breast of feeble age. 400  
 " Had I now been with dear Eliza blest'd,  
 " I should have this ecstatic bliss possess'd :  
 " But I shall find, my dearest girl! in thee,  
 " A daughter, wife, and ev'ry thing to me :  
 " And as old age comes on with stealing pace, 405  
 " And tears flow trickle down my furrow'd face,  
 " I'll on thy lap recline my snowy head,  
 " There sooth my cares, nor think Eliza dead.  
 " Then strict attention to my precepts pay,  
 " Mark well my reasons, my advice obey ; 410  
 " For soon from life to death we mortals pass,  
 " And quick our sand runs trickling thro' the glass :  
 " Avoid Castalio ; for mankind I know,  
 " And see, 'midst all his graces, something low:  
 " For tho' his manners are the most refin'd, 415  
 " Believe his soul is narrow and confin'd.

" A

“ A shallow fool in outward forms may trust,  
“ The wise alone regard the good and just;  
“ These counsels hold the nearest to your breast,  
“ So will you be, and make Anselmo, blest’d.” 420

As when some sweet harmonic sounds we hear,  
And pow’ful music soft invades the ear,  
We find the tumults of the mind subside,  
And render’d placid like the silver tide;  
So by Anselmo’s words, Matilda found 425  
Her warring passions in soft fetters bound;  
The sense-bewitching pow’r of love retreat,  
And Reason for a while resume her seat.  
But soon, alas ! her former flame return’d,  
And in her breast with double ardour burn’d; 430  
Restless and sad, she languish’d out the day,  
And long’d for feeling night, to flee away.  
Now twilight’s robe being over nature thrown,  
The weary ox unyok’d pac’d slowly home;  
The circling beetle took his airy flight, 435  
And solemn gloom foretold th’ approach of night :  
Struck

Struck with the meteors, now the lab'ring hind  
 Gaz'd from his cottage bench with wond'ring mind ;  
 The bat, with filmy wings, now shot along,  
 And the sweet nightingale pour'd forth her song ; 440  
 The halcyon sleep began to make his nest,  
 Not in the stormy, but the peaceful breast.

## CANTO V.

NOW the pale moon uprose in clouded robe,  
 And cast uncertain light upon the globe ;  
 Thro' vapours dense she floated soft away, 445  
 Now shone with bright, and now with blunted ray ;  
 The Fairies, Gnomes, and Sylphs (a pigmy band),  
 In dance and frolic tripp'd it hand in hand ;  
 With grace they gambol'd on the silver'd green, 450  
 Attended by their beauteous, sprightly queen.  
 The tides now influenc'd by her ruling pow'r,  
 O'erwhelm'd the meads, and crush'd the springing flow'r.  
 Chain'd on his bed of straw the madman fell,  
 Soon as he view'd her, gave an hideous yell ;  
 The dismal cry increas'd each maniac's fears, 455  
 Then follow'd groans, and shrieks, and floods of tears.

Hail ! Reason, emanation from above,  
 O great revealer of almighty love !

H

To



To you, an humble suppliant bends his knee,  
 O ne'er depart, but ever dwell with me! 460  
 My conduct by your maxims let me rule,  
 Nor madly err, nor madly play the fool;  
 The wayward passions in due bounds restrain,  
 And keep them fetter'd with your golden chain:  
 To man alone extends your glorious pow'r! 465  
 You guide his wand'ring steps each fleeting hour;  
 Tutor'd by you, we trace out Nature's laws,  
 Explore their uses, and explain the cause;  
 Inform'd by you, the sailor on the main,  
 Beholds the Hyades foreboding rain; 470  
 Beholds Orion, and the Hædi rise,  
 And the Boötes set in low'ring skies.  
 From earth to realms of bliss you shew the way,  
 And the creative wisdom wide display:—  
 Let all mankind with Reason's rules comply, 475  
 They'll teach them how to live, and how to die.

From home Matilda secretly withdrew,  
 And to the place of assignation flew;  
 She

She found all things prepar'd to aid her flight,  
And trusted to Castalio and the night : 480

For the metropolis without delay,

With fiery speed they eager drove away ;

The well-bred cattle, swifter than the wind,

Left towns and dreary commons far behind.

From orient hills the glorious god of day, 485

Now cloth'd in splendor, re-assum'd his sway :

The fleecy clouds, with various hues array'd,

Dividing flow, the azure sky display'd ;

Now up the steep thick mists in order roll'd,

And mountains' tops appear'd bespread with gold ;

On all creation Sol diffus'd his beams,

Pierc'd thro' the thicket's gloom, and gilt the streams :

The shrill-ton'd lark quick-mounting from the corn,

With dewy wings, proclaim'd in song the morn,

When a domestic came in wild affright, 495

And told Anselmo of his daughter's flight.

As when intent on work, the lab'ring swain,

Sees darkness flow increasing veil the plain,

He knows a tempest soon will rend the skies,

And for a shelter to his cottage hies ; 500

But

But ere he, frightened, can secure the door,  
 He falls by light'ning on his rushy floor:  
 So did the good Anselmo, when he knew  
 The child whom he ador'd had prov'd untrue;  
 O'erwhelm'd with grief, he some time senseless lay, 505  
 'Till manly fortitude resum'd its sway,  
 'Till resignation made his bosom still,  
 And taught submission to th' Almighty's will;  
 Then quick revolving in his anxious mind,  
 How he could best his lost Matilda find; 510  
 Without delay he left the peaceful plain,  
 His only joy and comfort to regain,  
 And with a faithful servant quickly rode,  
 Towards the false Castalio's town abode.  
 Nor had he journey'd far, before he knew 515  
 He did the object of his care pursue:  
 But now, alas! he ill fatigue could bear,  
 For time had silver'd o'er his scanty hair;  
 A raging fever therefore seiz'd his frame,  
 Before he could the capital attain: 520

Nine days he linger'd with the dread disease,  
 Nor could the fatal malady appease ;  
 The tenth, when midnight darkling spread its gloom,  
 With silent stride grim Death pac'd round the room;  
 His heart on flutt'ring pinions saw him stand,      525  
 With aspect fierce, and with uplifted hand !  
 His tremb'ling limbs a clay-cold damp bespread,  
 As cloth'd in terrors he approach'd the bed !  
 The soul, prepar'd to take her heav'nly flight,  
 Panted with joy for everlasting light,      530  
 But ere she from her earthly prison broke,  
 Thus, to his fate resign'd, Anselmo spoke :

" All-wise Creator, infinitely just !  
 " In whom, from youth to age, I've put my trust,  
 " Whose laws I've seldom broke, whose grace implor'd,  
 " And in thy wond'rous works have thee ador'd ;  
 " O grant me strength thy sov'reign aid impart,  
 " That I may boldly meet the tyrant's dart ;  
 " Nor shrink when he shall place his icy hand  
 " Upon these quiv'ring lips, at thy command :      540

I

" Calm



“ Calm let me leave this vale of tears behind,  
“ And by thy great example die resign’d ;  
“ Forgive whate’er I’ve said, ’or done amiss,  
“ And take me to thyself and endless blifs ;  
“ Where troubles ne’er intrude, where all is peace, 545  
“ Where worldly cares and raging tumults cease :  
“ Bow down thine ear, O Lord, and hear my pray’r,  
“ Protect my girl with thy Almighty care !  
“ Let her not feel the pangs I’ve felt for her,  
“ Nor from the flow’ry paths of Virtue err ; 550  
“ Let her not disregard thy holy will,  
“ But strictly ev’ry ordinance fulfil :  
“ O ! may she virtuous live, and, dying, prove  
“ The blifs ecstastic of a Saviour’s love !”

Some time thus wrapt in pray’r Anselmo past, 555  
But soon the happy man drew near his last ;  
Faint and more faint the whisp’ring accents grew,  
At last the spirit to its Maker flew.  
Farewell ! O good old man ! enough of woe  
Did you experience in the world below ; 560  
Enough

Enough was harrafs'd by the storms of fate,  
 And the unsteady friendship of the great ;  
 But now you're gone where grandeur nought avails,  
 Where the unblemish'd soul alone prevails ;  
 Where soaring Virtue on this earth looks down, 565  
 And sweet Religion gains an heav'nly crown ;  
 Where gracious souls enjoy eternal spring,  
 And faints the great Jehovah's praises sing.

CANTO

## CANTO. VI.

**H**OW soon, alas ! are all our vows o'erthrown,  
 How soon is Virtue banish'd from her throne ! 570  
 Whene'er we suffer specious Vice to gain  
 The least ascendancy o'er Virtue's reign ;  
 Slow is the falling off from good to ill,  
 'Tis by degrees that Vice obtains her will ;  
 Like waves which gently lave the wafting shore, 575  
 'Till headlong down it falls, to rise no more :  
 Easy in various vice we all proceed,  
 But to return to Virtue's hard indeed !  
 For Vice extinguishes each gen'rous flame  
 Which warms our breasts, and dignifies our frame ; 580  
 And when the tender feelings once depart,  
 'Tis then that Vice triumphant rules the heart ;  
 Makes us inanimate in Virtue's cause,  
 Contemn her warnings, and reject her laws.

Look

Look round the world, and there behold with woe, 585  
 What dire effects from vicious habits flow !  
 Day after day those ravages appear,  
 Which melt the eye and shock the tender ear ;  
 Unnumber'd, lawless ills of ev'ry kind,  
 Are common grown, alas ! amongst mankind. 590

When wealth to Vice its potent influence joins,  
 The Stygian fiend in all her glory shines ;  
 She then her hellish plans to all extends,  
 Nor spares her nearest, nor her dearest friends ;  
 'Gainst all alike she deals her baneful darts, 595  
 And glories most, when most she strikes our hearts.  
 When plunder is her mark, the Indian bleeds,  
 His hard-earn'd property her grandeur feeds ;  
 Without remorse she points the knife at all,  
 And smiling hears the voice of anguish call ; 600  
 A ruin'd race of helpless Begums fly,  
 Before the reeking sword, and starving die.  
 Thro' seas of blood she wades with giant stride,  
 And spreads her universal havock wide.

K

Matilda



Matilda having left her peaceful plains, 605  
 Safely arriv'd where endless riot reigns ;  
 Where vice and villainy in secret work,  
 And, fearless of detection, guilty lurk.  
 Dazzl'd with scenes where splendor holds her reign,  
 So diff'rent from the customs of the plain, 610  
 At an unlucky moment (pain to tell !)  
 The hapless maid, to Virtue bade farewell !  
 With ev'ry wish, her lover made, comply'd,  
 And let mad Love, instead of Reason, guide :  
 But soon swift conscience made her bosom bleed, 615  
 From one false step a thousand pangs succeed !  
 Reflection now, with all her sober train,  
 Upbraided her with loss of peace, and fame ;  
 The fatal step in strongest colours drew,  
 When rashly from her only friend she flew. 620  
 To be united by the sacred tie  
 She daily urg'd Castalio to comply ;  
 Some new excuse each day the caitiff made,  
 And grew quite cold tow'rds her he had betray'd.  
 She, mournful, saw the change—her roses fled, 625  
 She pin'd—and o'er her cheeks a paleness spread.

Some

Some days, unhappy, she in anguish spent,  
 Nor felt a single gleam of soft content ;  
 CONTENT ! from angels sprung, to heav'n ally'd,  
 The fruit of Virtue, and the peasant's pride, 630  
 Balm to the wounded mind, the care-worn breast,  
 For ever blessing, and for ever blest ;  
 The sweet foretaste of greatest joys in store,  
 When earth, and skies, and seas, shall be no more !  
 Some days the lorn Matilda pass'd in grief, 635  
 Conflicting passions granting no relief ;  
 When she was told (distressful to relate)  
 The good Anselmo had resign'd to fate !  
 When first majestic thunder strikes the ear,  
 We then the distant sounds but faintly hear ; 640  
 But by degrees dark clouds o'erhade the sky,  
 And then it roars tremendous ! light'nings fly !  
 By starts the storm exerts its utmost force,  
 Appalls mankind, and all things in its course :  
 So did there now on poor Matilda's head 645  
 A tempest burst—the vital spirits fled :  
 But life reviv'd, the blood began to flow,  
 And soon recall'd her to the scene of woe ;

Now

Now Horror, fell Despair, with Fear behind,  
 Crowded themselves on her distracted mind ; 650  
 And future ills (a more distressful crew,)  
 Exulting, held their banners to her view ;  
 Now on the brink of some tall cliff she stands,  
 And falls down headlong on the yellow sands ;  
 Her tempest-beaten mind no comfort knows, 655  
 And scarce a glimpse of hope or soft repose !  
 But like some bark when half the storm is o'er,  
 Crowds all her sail to reach a friendly shore ;  
 Yet ere she can, fresh tempests furious rise,  
 And make the foaming billows lave the skies : 660  
 To him who now she thought would make her blest  
 She flew, and thus her misery express'd :

“ Behold a wretch ! Castalio ! see her here  
 “ For comfort fly to him she holds most dear !  
 “ As on the guilty evils e'er descend, 665  
 “ Commence my husband, and oh ! be my friend !—  
 “ For you I left a pious parent's care ;  
 “ But hold—that path leads on to fell despair ;

There

" There madnefs lies—and furious clinks his chains,  
 " Makes feeble ev'ry nerve and chills my veins: 670  
 " Mine was the fault, great Heav'n, forgive the deed,  
 " Mine, mine the fault, that made his bosom bleed!  
 " For which now Sorrow, with tyrannic fway,  
 " And Grief, with anguish keen, the act repay:  
 " In Virtue's sweet abode there Peace refides, 675  
 " With mild Content, and ev'ry blifs beſides;  
 " But Heaven's ſo juſt, the ſinner cannot reſt,  
 " Ten thouſand tortures rack the guilty breaſt:  
 " Is hope then fled? O no! if you are kind,  
 " Time may allay the tumults of my mind; 680  
 " Pity my ſorrows, ſooth the heartfelt groan,  
 " And in the lawful way make me your own!  
 " 'Twas pow'rful love firſt led my ſteps aſtray,  
 " And made me each uncurb'd deſire obey:  
 " 'Twas love of you—Oh then my honour ſave! 685  
 " Nor ſend me guilty to a timeleſs grave;  
 " My inexperience ſhield, your vows perform,  
 " And eaſe a ſoul by various paſſions torn!  
 " How oft' at eve, when Philomel has ſung,  
 " Till with her ſtrains all liſt'ning nature rung, 690

L.

" Have



" Have you affail'd my ears with tales of love,  
 " And swore thro' life you'd ever constant prove ;  
 " Think how I, ravish'd, joy'd to hear the sound,  
 " Think how my heart the magic numbers bound !  
 " Then now when grief lies heavy on my breast, 695  
 " Regard those vows, and make Matilda blest:  
 " All gracious Heav'n will smile upon the deed,  
 " Forgive the past, and happiness succeed."

She ceas'd—and from her beauteous eyes there stream'd  
 A pearly show'r, where soft persuasion beam'd ; 700  
 Sweet she appear'd, like some young flowret lorn,  
 Bending beneath the dew-drops of the morn.

When thus Castalio—" Pacify your mind,  
 " Indulge not useless grief, but be resign'd ;  
 " Both young and old without distinction fall, 705  
 " For Death, impartial, hurls his dart at all ;  
 " Kings, princes, heroes, statesmen, own his pow'r,  
 " On all alike awaits the dreaded hour ;  
 " The brightest genius, beauty, sense, and wit,  
 " Admir'd by all, must to their fate submit : 710  
 " Grieve

“ Grieve not for him whose virtues will prevail ;  
“ To weep that good men die, can ne’er avail :  
“ Oh ! rather sigh to think, how few prepare  
“ For Death’s approach, but make this world their care ;  
“ To pleasure dedicate both youth and age, 715  
“ Thoughtless of that which should their time engage ;  
“ At last down folly’s tide they’re struggling borne,  
“ And oft, too late, their past misconduct mourn :  
“ But you, my dear Matilda, have no cause  
“ To weep for him who broke not Virtue’s laws ; 720  
“ Who now safe landed on the heav’nly shore,  
“ Will ne’er be harass’d by life’s tempests more.  
“ Know, ere the glorious sun shall three times rise,  
“ And ride majestic down the western skies,  
“ Ere three times shall the silent brooding night 725  
“ Slowly give way to heav’n-born rosy light,  
“ The priest shall join our hands, nor shall my love  
“ One pang experience which I can remove ;  
“ Then at the will of Heav’n no more repine,  
“ Nor with thy sorrows rend this breast of mine !” 730  
He said—a sudden joy her mind impress’d,  
And downy peace sat lightly on her breast.

Hell-

Hell-born Hypocrisy, what evils flow  
 From your insidious snares on all below!  
 By you, our first blest'd parents were beguil'd, 735  
 And banish'd scenes where endless pleasures smil'd,  
 To tread with grief a pilgrimage of pain,  
 And all life's num'rous evils to sustain:  
 Since then you have your race triumphant run,  
 And thousands by your wiles have been undone; 740  
 Your Stygian dark designs are worse by far,  
 Than famine, pestilence, or raging war;  
 Like varying Proteus, different forms you wear,  
 The unsuspecting better to ensnare;  
 Sometimes in friendship's mask you tread the stage,  
 And ruin youth, and break the peace of age;  
 Sometimes you make a lover's part your care,  
 And drive some hapless maid to fell despair;  
 By you fair Virtue's banish'd from her throne,  
 And left beneath a weight of ills to groan. 750  
 But who can paint what dreadful scenes arise,  
 When under Virtue's cloak you cheat our eyes?  
 'Tis then you spread unmeasur'd waste on all,  
 And in your pit ten thousand victims fall;

But

But know, foul fiend, altho' you triumph here, 755  
 When judgment comes, your deeds must then appear;  
 Your bosom bar'd, will be conspicuous seen,  
 And not one virtue thro' your vices beam;  
 But at the bar, appall'd by guilt, you'll stand,  
 Encircled by a dread, accusing band! 760  
 There, froze with terror, for your sentence wait,  
 And hear th' all-righteous Judge pronounce your fate!



## C A N T O VII.

**N**OW in the east the sun, with golden ray  
 Beaming refulgent, brought the promis'd day;  
 When breaking from the arms of soft repose, 765  
 With bosom light, Matilda quickly rose;  
 She hail'd th' auspicious morn, when peace and rest,  
 Would soon return, long strangers to her breast;  
 When by the sacred union she should find  
 Her sorrows less, more pacified her mind: 770  
 Now from her eyes on leaden wings there flew  
 Dejection dull, with all her languid crew;  
 And once again, those beauteous orbs were seen  
 With lustre bright and matchless charms to beam.  
 Just so the sun clear'd from a sable cloud, 775  
 Which did from wond'ring eyes his beauty shroud,  
 In azure skies again refulgent rides,  
 And cheers our sight, and all the world besides.

With

With ev'ry ornament of drefs array'd,  
 Matilda thus her peerless charms display'd; 780  
 Wing'd with impatience, ſhe repair'd in haſte  
 To meet the man on whom her love was plac'd;  
 But great was her alarm, when it was known  
 He ere the dawn of day had left his home!  
 A ſudden damp her former joy beſpread, 785  
 And ev'ry golden dream her boſom fled;  
 Alternate hopes and fears her mind poſſeſs'd,  
 And clouds eclips'd the ſunſhine of her breaſt.

In anxious expectation all the day,  
 The lorn Matilda paſs'd each hour away; 790  
 Adown her cheeks round drops of ſorrow ſtole,  
 The frequent ſigh eſcap'd her downcaſt ſoul;  
 Conjectures various crowded on her mind,  
 Nor could ſhe for his flight a reaſon find;  
 Fear and deſpair within her boſom rag'd, 795  
 Her panting heart ſome dread event preſag'd!  
 A proſpect dreary roſe before her view,  
 Where bleak Miſfortune train'd her ghafly crew:

With

With threat'ning mien she saw the spectre stand,  
 And Comfort fly before her dreaded hand; 800  
 Beneath her blighting reign Peace blasted lay,  
 And Desolation spoil'd her flow'ry way.

Now quick approach'd, with dusky veil, the night,  
 And, cloth'd in darkness, banish'd cheerful light;  
 A solemn gloom oppress'd the weary eye, 805  
 And fable clouds bespread the angry sky:  
 Now more uneasy was Matilda grown,  
 And peace and quiet from her breast were flown.  
 But what contending passions shook her frame,  
 When in the room Castalio's servant came! 810  
 " And is he safe arriv'd?"—she eager cry'd,  
 " Arriv'd! no, no!" he savagely reply'd;  
 " But I am come his orders to obey,  
 " And know, that here you must no longer stay:  
 " Sighs, tears, and pray'rs to me are all in vain, 815  
 " No tender feelings in my bosom reign;  
 " My life has been, like the tempestuous seas,  
 " Alike a stranger to content and ease;

" By

" By Fortune's fickle blasts tofs'd here and there,  
 " A slave to mis'ry and oppressive care; 820  
 " Worn out by hardships and continual woe,  
 " I now am heedless what I say or do;  
 " Then do not hesitate, but quick comply,  
 " From hence yourself and maid must instant hie."

" How, miscreant! vassal!" she exclaim'd in ire,  
 " Dare you thus use your tongue?—begone! retire!  
 " Hence, with that threat'ning brow, dependant rude!  
 " Nor more upon this injur'd form intrude."

She said—but overpower'd by such alarms,  
 She swooning fell into Fidelia's arms. 830

But soon the faculties of life return'd,  
 And in her breast a just resentment burn'd:  
 " Is it then come to this, ye pow'rs?" she cry'd,  
 " Can such vile treach'ry in man's heart reside?  
 " Can he, angelic form! with reason grac'd, 835  
 " Change nature with the brutes o'er whom he's plac'd?  
 " Prove more ferocious than the wolf who prowls,  
 " And o'er the quiv'ring limb with rapture grows?

N

" Alas!



" Alas ! it is too true—too well I know,  
 " That man's more fell than all the brutes below ! 840  
 " 'Twas he that like a savage spoiler came,  
 " And robb'd me of my peace, and honest fame !  
 " Robb'd me of him who watch'd my tender years ;  
 " Let me not think !—his bleeding heart appears !  
 " Shall I then tamely to my wrongs submit ? 845  
 " Forbid the thought !—this horrid place I'll quit ;  
 " Down to his country mansion quick repair,  
 " For well I know the cruel monster's there :  
 " Then, good Fidelia, come ; make no delay,  
 " Let us from this detested spot away. 850  
 " Soon shall an injur'd woman take her part,  
 " Soon plunge a dagger in the traitor's heart !"

Now lightnings flash'd successive from a cloud,  
 And the tremendous thunder roar'd aloud !  
 A deluge fell of prone descending rain, 855  
 And sturdy knotted oaks were clove in twain !  
 The boist'rous winds with savage fury strove,  
 O'erthrew the mould'ring pile, and stripp'd the grove.  
 Matilda, heedless of the dreadful night,  
 Wing'd with revenge, pursu'd her dreary flight ; 860  
 The

The constant, kind Fidelia was her guide,  
 Her only comfort, and her only pride;  
 In all her woes she took a feeling part,  
 And glory'd in a good and honest heart;  
 In her each virtuous excellence combin'd, 865  
 And genuine traits of nature grac'd her mind.  
 Beguil'd by various passions far they went,  
 Before Matilda found her spirits spent;  
 But now a coldness seiz'd on ev'ry part,  
 And with unusual feelings throb'd her heart: 870  
 Unable to proceed, they eager drew  
 Near to a decent church which met their view,  
 In hopes to find some kindly shelter there,  
 To afford a refuge from th' inclement air.

And now the tempest still'd, the gliding moon 875  
 Cheer'd with her silver light the yew-tree's gloom;  
 On many a turf-cloth'd grave her beams she shed,  
 And o'er both rich and poor her mantle spread.  
 The weather-beaten hind, his labours o'er,  
 Sleeps here as sweet, as he who sceptres bore; 880  
 Obscur'd in life, no uselefs cares he knew,  
 Toil strung his nerves, and made him happy too;

A chaste

A chaste and virtuous wife his bosom blest,  
 A num'rous offspring crown'd his age with rest,  
 Peace and good-humour were his constant lot, 885  
 And Virtue shower'd her blessings on his cot.

Upon a time-worn bench Matilda sat,  
 Revolving in her mind her hapless fate ;  
 And as she to Fidelia wept her doom,  
 A hollow voice sigh'd lonely from a tomb ! 890  
 " Once more, my injur'd child, a parent hear :  
 " Oh ! know the period to your life draws near !  
 " Already the fell tyrant points his dart,  
 " And soon will still that perturbed heart :  
 " Know, I forgive—ask Heav'n forgiveness too ! 895  
 " And with a contrite heart your Maker sue ;  
 " He'll pardon ev'ry thing you've done amiss,  
 " And take you to himself, and endless bliss ;  
 " Meet death with firmness, in th' Almighty trust,  
 " Farewell !—again I mingle with the dust !" 900

" I come—I come !—O ! dearest father !—save !"  
 Matilda cry'd—" I come—to press thy grave !  
 " I feel

" I feel my injur'd innocence prevail,  
 " And Heav'n o'er all my frailties throws a veil:  
 " Soon shall this bursting heart thy bosom press, 905  
 " Soon shall these longing arms thy form caress;  
 " But hold!—while life remains—Fidelia, take,  
 " My dearest friend!—this casket for my sake;  
 " If I had worlds, they all should be thy own,  
 " Such sterling worth as thine is seldom known!  
 " Let no funereal pomp attend my bier,  
 " Yet let remembrance drop the silent tear;  
 " Soon will Fidelia meet my happy shade,  
 " With joy shall I receive the virtuous maid.—  
 " But lo!—the tyrant comes—farewell!—adieu! 915  
 " Castalio—I forgive—and may Heav'n too!"

She said—then sunk into a peaceful dream,  
 Soft as the breeze that dies upon the stream.  
 And now the roseate morn, with golden robe,  
 Once more with beauteous eyes illum'd the globe; 920  
 The lab'ring peasants, starting from repose,  
 Each to their various tasks with pleasure rose:  
 The dismal news soon all the village knew,  
 And to the lorn Fidelia's comfort flew;

O

O'erwhelm'd



O'erwhelm'd with sorrow, there some days she stay'd,  
 Then saw Matilda by Anselmo laid;  
 Upon her grave ten thousand tears were shed,  
 And still she's mourn'd, tho' number'd with the dead.

That gracious Pow'r ! from whom all goodness flows,  
 Who ev'ry secret of the bosom knows ; 930  
 With whom eternal truth and mercy dwell,  
 Who stills the storm, or bids the tempest swell ;  
 At whose command, earth, skies, and seas obey,  
 And dreadful thunders own his sov'reign sway ;  
 Who stops the furious whirlwind's mad career, 935  
 And makes the mighty mountain quake with fear ;  
 Who in succession brings the seasons round,  
 First, smiling Spring, which scatters sweets around ;  
 The Summer next, which beautifies the plain,  
 And fruitful Autumn, crown'd with golden grain ; 940  
 Then cheerless Winter, which the earth deforms,  
 Obscur'd in clouds, and mists, and turbid storms :  
 That Source of Wisdom ! and Almighty Love,  
 Who rules the earth below, and heav'ns above,  
 Will ne'er unpunish'd let the miscreant go, 945  
 The dark designer of this scene of woe !

Tho'

Tho' vengeance moves but slow, it soon o'ertakes  
 The villain who the bounds of virtue breaks;  
 Soon will the horrid wretch, with anguish find  
 The tortures which attend a guilty mind! 950  
 Soon leave the world with a detested name,  
 And not one virtue celebrate his fame!

To curb the passions, and the will restrain,  
 And the equality of mind maintain;  
 To check each thought which tends to wound the peace,  
 To lessen sorrow, happiness increase;  
 To keep Religion ever in our view,  
 Obey her dictates, and her ways pursue;  
 And from Affliction's face to wipe the tear,  
 Be good to all mankind, to all sincere; 960  
 Be this our care—and doubt not we shall find,  
 Pursuing these, an unmolested mind:  
 The woes attendant on this nether world,  
 Will then from ev'ry mortal far be hurl'd:  
 Adversity its diff'rent forms shall try, 965  
 Yet be unable to create a sigh:  
 Corroding Care in haste shall fly our train,  
 Pale Envy shake her venom'd locks in vain;

Detested

Detested Discord, Stygian fiend, shall cease,  
 And life be one continual scene of peace. 970  
 All other joys, but those which Virtue brings,  
 Are unsubstantial, transitory things.  
 When beauty, wisdom, sense, shall fade away,  
 This reigns triumphant, never to decay;  
 Time, with his sweeping hand, may all destroy, 975  
 But God-like Virtue shall his power defy.  
 Shall see unnumber'd empires rise and fall,  
 And borne on eagle wing, surmount them all.  
 Thus some huge rock, amidst the roaring waves,  
 The howling tempest, and the whirlwind braves. 980  
 On its substantial base unmov'd relies,  
 Securely stands, nor dreads the angry skies.

